

5 Times Mike Wheeler & Will Byers Nearly Kissed, and the 1 Time They Finally Did by finnxwheeler

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Summary:

The title is pretty self-explanatory.

1. The First Near-Kiss.

Troy and James had decided to gang up on Will during recess. They had bullied him and had also attempted to hurt him, but Mike had intervened almost instantly. Will had begged Mike to stay out of it, that they wanted him instead, but Mike wasn't having any of it. He'd practically gotten in Troy's face, telling him that messing with Will meant missing with Mike as well. No one was allowed to hurt Will on Mike's watch, he'd told them. Not now, not ever

As expected, Troy and James had hurt Mike instead. Troy had given him a black eye and a few possible bruises on the ribcage, too. Mike looked on the verge of tears as the bullies walked away, and Will quickly ushered him inside. Since recess was still ongoing, the halls were fairly empty—which meant they didn't have to explain what just happened to anyone. Will told Mike to wait in the restroom, and Will went to see the school nurse. He lied to her, saying that a friend of his had fallen on the playground and needed some ice. When the nurse asked to see the friend, Will said that he was too embarrassed about the injury and had sent Will for a pack of ice. Will could tell that the nurse didn't seem very convinced, but she went and got some, anyway. After thanking her, Will rushed to the bathroom and found Mike waiting by the sinks.

"Got the ice," Will announced with a soft smile, walking over to his friend with the ice pack in hand.

"Thanks," Mike said, smiling and wincing when the smile reached his injured eye.

Will frowned, gently pressing the ice pack to Mike's bruised eye upon Mike's request. Mike flinched away at first, but slowly relaxed into the soothing coolness the ice was providing. It felt good, and soon the pain was numbing and the swelling was also diminishing.

"My mom is going to have a cow," Mike said after a moment, his uncovered eye turning its gaze to Will.

"Yeah," Will said. "What are you going to tell her, anyway?"

Mike shrugged. “Dunno. Maybe that I got hit a little too hard with a dodgeball during gym? Do you think she’d buy that? Look, I know what you’re probably thinking. You’re thinking this wouldn’t have happened if I would have just stayed out of it, but I...”

Will was no longer listening. He had become distracted by how Mike looked in that moment. Even with an ice pack over his eye, he looked so beautiful. Will watched his lips as he spoke, curling his own inward as he thought about closing the small space between them and pressing their lips together.

But he couldn’t do that. Mike was his best friend, for crying out loud. Nothing would ruin their friendship faster than Mike finding out about Will’s crush on him. Right?

“Will?” Mike asked. “Will? Are you okay?”

Will’s eyes snapped up to meet Mike’s lone one, a dark blush creeping over his cheeks. He gave a small nod and shy smile. “Yeah. I’m...I’m okay.”

Mike never questioned why Will was so red in the face. Truth be told, he already had a bit of an idea, and that was okay...because Mike felt the same, too.

2. The Second Near-Kiss.

Winter break had come as quickly as it usually ended. Two days before Christmas 1982, Will, Mike, Dustin, and Lucas had gathered at the Byers home to play in the newly-fallen snow that a storm had dumped on Hawkins. Mike and Will were building their own snowmen, while Dustin and Lucas chased each other and engaged in a snowball fight.

Will was bundled up in some secondhand clothes of Jonathan's, but Joyce had gotten each of her children brand-new winter jackets as an early Christmas present. Both boys had loved their new winter wear, Will in particular, because he loved how wonderfully warm it kept him on the coldest days. He'd asked specifically for a blue one, and Joyce had found one for him on sale in a shop downtown.

Will had wanted a blue one, because it was Mike's favorite color.

Mike had complimented him the coat before they set to work on their snowmen, saying that blue was Will's color and that it looked great on him. This had caused Will's cheeks to go pink in a gentle flush, but it was nothing compared to the blushing he was about to experience.

Mike was focused on building his snowman, rolling snow into a large ball for the snowman's base. Next, he focused on making the torso, rolling more snow and carefully setting it atop the larger ball. It had started snowing again, with large snowflakes falling into parts of Mike's hair that were uncovered by his toque. His green jacket began to accumulate a thick white dust, his eyelashes also catching some of the flakes. Will also observed how Mike's cheeks were flushing from the cold air, covering those freckles he adored so much in a soft pink hue. Mike, apparently, hadn't noticed any of these details, for his tongue was sticking out in concentration as he worked on his snowman.

Will had been so lost in admiration that he hadn't noticed that Mike had gotten the snowman's head on. Before he could distract himself with something other than Mike and how pretty the snow was making him look, Mike had noticed Will staring. Will gulped, cheeks

turning hot despite the cold. He looked down, pretending to fumble with snow to build his own snowman. As he began gathering the snow, he heard snow crunching next to him. He looked up and saw Mike standing there, a smile on his lips as he put a gloved hand to his toque.

“Do you want to borrow this?” Mike asked curiously. “You aren’t wearing one and I thought maybe your hood wasn’t keeping you warm enough. You took it off or something, and your hair is covered in snow. I thought maybe...you wanted to borrow my toque.”

Will had been so distracted by Mike that he hadn’t noticed his hood had blown down in the wind. The embarrassment of the situation had caused Will’s cheeks to redden even further.

“No,” Will said with an embarrassed grin. “I’m fine.”

“Here,” Mike said, moving even closer to his best friend. “Let me help you.”

Before Will could ask what Mike had wanted to help with, Mike had reached up to start gently brushing snow from Will’s hair. Will looked down at the white ground, his cheeks now so hot he was certain he could melt all of the snow himself. He dared to look up after he felt Mike’s hands stop moving through his hair, also noticing that his hood had been put back up. Will nearly squeaked when he saw how close Mike’s face was to his, seeing every freckle painted across Mike’s cheeks and every snowflake that littered his dark lashes. Will dared himself to move closer, and his heart pounded nervously in his chest when Mike didn’t move away.

Their lips were an inch apart when Joyce yelled that she had hot chocolate and freshly baked cookies in the house. Mike turned his head and began running toward the house, with Will following. Dustin and Lucas were also running in the same direction, chattering excitedly among themselves as they did so.

Will and Mike didn’t discuss that moment between them for the rest of the day, but it was all either of them could think about.

3. The Third Near-Kiss.

Will was finally home from the hospital, after spending over a week from his real home in his reality. It had been a relief to finally come home where he belonged, instead of trapped in a horrific imitation. Mike had offered to stay over while at the hospital, to keep an eye on Will while Jonathan and Joyce got some much-needed rest. Joyce reluctantly allowed it, after Mike promised her that he would allow Will to get some rest of his own.

Will was grateful for the offer. He hadn't stopped thinking about Mike, even at times in the Upside Down when he felt like giving up. He'd missed his mother and brother—of course he did—but he was willing to bet that he'd missed Mike Wheeler even more.

Once they got home, Joyce retreated to the shower while Jonathan, who was practically sleeping while standing, went into his bedroom to crash. Mike followed Will closely to Will's own room, making sure that Will wouldn't fall or need Mike to help him walk. Will knew that Mike was struggling with a loss, one that Will couldn't fully understand, and he felt a bit guilty for Mike coming over. Maybe Mike had wanted to deal with his own grief before worrying about someone else.

Then again, Mike had been the one to offer...

"Thanks for coming over," Will said as he climbed into bed, patting the spot next to him for Mike to sit. He did. "I know...I mean, I don't really, but I just...I'm sorry about...her."

Mike smiled sadly, looking down at his hands for a moment before slowly meeting Will's eyes. "It's okay," he said. "I...I really do miss her a lot, but I also have you back. I don't...Will, when I thought you were dead, it broke me. Do you understand? It broke me."

Will smiled ashamedly, nodding before looking away. "I'm so sorry. I didn't mean for any of you to go through that."

To Will's surprise, Mike laid down next to him. Mike moved over a little to give Mike more room as Mike pulled the blankets over them

both—giving most of them to Will. He faced Will then, with Will meeting those pain-filled brown eyes. His best friend could say he was alright, that the situation itself was alright, but it truly wasn't.

Mike Wheeler had very expressive eyes; they always gave up his lies.

"It doesn't matter now," Mike said softly, his breath ghosting over Will's face, coated with the peppermint from the candy he'd eaten on the way home from the hospital. "You're here, you're back home safe and sound, and she...El...she's not. I wish she was, and I want her back here more than anything so that she'll also be safe, but I...I don't know if she ever will be here again. If you could've seen what happened to her, Will...I just..."

Will moved a little closer to Mike, but still maintaining a safe distance. He reached out to lay a comforting hand on Mike's lower arm, blushing as he moved that hand down to take hold of Mike's. He expected Mike to pull back or to at least push Will's hand away, but instead Mike laced their fingers together. Mike's palm was a little clammy, but it still felt nice to Will. It felt right somehow.

Will's eyes drooped sleepily as Mike squeezed his hand. Mike squirmed closer, a grin settled on his lips as he observed Will. Will was always adorable when he was sleepy, and Mike wanted nothing more than to press a quick, gentle kiss to his lips. He knew, though, that this wasn't the time or the place. Will had almost died, and Mike had lost a girl that he cared so much about. Both boys had been through enough for one week, and a kiss would potentially complicate things even further. Neither of them needed that; not right now. There was also possible rejection to think about, and Mike knew he wouldn't be able to cope with losing his best friend again, especially after just getting him back.

Before Mike could consider it even further, Will had fallen into a deep sleep—still holding Mike's hand. Mike didn't let go, and settled for pressing a tender kiss to Will's forehead instead. Mike laid next to him on that quiet November afternoon, watching Will sleep for only a few minutes before some much-needed sleep came for him, too.

4. The Fourth Near-Kiss.

Rain was coming down in what seemed like buckets. Naturally, today was the day that Will and Mike had forgotten to wear their jackets to school and had to bike to Mike's home in the rain. By the time they reached the house, both were drenched from head to toe. Karen fussed about them tracking water into the house, and went up to Mike's room to grab dry clothes for both of them. When she came back with the clothing and a towel for each of them, she advised the boys to throw their wet clothes in the bathtub so she could dry them before Will had to go home. Mike went into the bathroom first, emerging a few minutes later in light brown pants and a green striped shirt. Will went in next, peeling the wet articles off and discarding them next to Mike's in the tub. He slipped the navy blue sweater over his head before pulling the dark grey sweatpants on, using the towel to gently sop some of the water from his hair. Will was thankful that the sweats had a drawstring, for they were a little loose around the waist. He had to roll both the pants legs and sweater sleeves up a little, because Mike was taller than he was and the clothes were a little too big for his small frame. Still, they were comfortable and they still smelled like Mike, despite having been washed.

He exited the bathroom to Karen telling him that Mike was waiting for him in the basement. Will walked down to see Mike sitting in the blanket fort, a sad sigh passing Will's lips at the sight of his friend. Mike had been spending a lot of time in there, and Will thought he knew why. That's where the girl—Eleven—had stayed when she was there. Mike was looking down at the walkie-talkie in his hand, distracted until Will gently cleared his throat to announce his presence. Mike's eyes snapped up, softening and filling with a bit of joy, beaming when he saw Will in his clothes.

"You look..." Mike began, cutting off as he nervously cleared his own throat. "I mean, I told you last winter that blue was your color. Turns out, that hasn't changed."

"I..." Will said, moving to the fort and sitting cross-legged in front of Mike. "What were you going to say?"

“Hm?” Mike hummed, eyes falling to Will’s arm as the sleeve slid down to completely cover his small limb.

“You said, ‘you look...’ but you didn’t finish,” Will observed. “What were you going to say? I look, what?”

“Oh,” Mike said, cheeks reddening as he shook his head. “Nothing. It was nothing.”

“Mike...” Will said softly, breath caught in his throat in surprise as Mike gently took hold of Will’s sleeve-covered arm.

Mike slowly rolled Will’s sleeve back up for him, taking Will’s hand in both of his own after. Even Mike’s hands were bigger than Will’s, and just one was enough to envelope Will’s entire fist. Still, Will couldn’t help but tense slightly, the warm, soft touch of Mike’s hands causing him to forget the unfinished statement and focus on how content he felt in this very moment.

Mike’s thumbs gently caressed the back of Will’s hand, and Will’s cheeks began to flame with heat. Mike’s own freckled cheeks turned slightly pink, and he couldn’t help but notice how small Will looked in his clothes. The sweater was practically a tent, and the sweats were at least a size or so too big. Will was just so precious to Mike, in more ways than just one. That’s what Mike had wanted to tell him, that Will looked as precious as the place he was beginning to hold in Mike’s heart.

He really needed to get over himself and tell Will how he truly felt.

Instead of using words, Mike swallowed his fear, gathering the courage to try for a kiss once again. He ignored the nervous feeling in the pit of his stomach, leaning in close to Will as the butterflies began to erupt in his belly. Mike was delighted when Will didn’t recoil, but it still didn’t stop either from growing even antsy in anticipation.

“Michael!” Karen’s voice suddenly rang from the top of the basement stairs. Both boys jumped, moving apart while Mike kept hold of Will’s hand. He gave it a reassuring squeeze as his mother spoke again. “There’s hot tea up here for you boys. Lucas and Dustin have just arrived as well.”

Will and Mike stood, both grinning to themselves as they made their way upstairs. They kept their hands tightly clasped, not daring to let go until they were almost to the kitchen. After all, what would their friends think?

5. The Fifth Near-Kiss.

Christmas 1983 swept in rather quickly, but none of the boys were complaining. The four of them were huddled around the dessert table at the Wheeler's annual Christmas party, wearing sweaters their mothers had gotten them as gifts. Dustin was smuggling some of the peanut butter chocolate chip cookies for later, with Will pretending not to notice. Will giggled when he saw Mike giving Dustin a displeasing look, and Mike grinned as a result. Lucas couldn't help but roll his eyes in annoyance as he watched them. It was painfully clear to him—and to everyone, pretty much—that Mike and Will each had a crush on each other. Lucas had been forever thinking of ways to get them to act on it, to make them realize what everyone else did. He had no such luck thus far.

Until an idea suddenly struck him.

"Why don't we move over there?" Lucas suggested, pointing to a place where mistletoe was hanging. "It's less crowded."

Dustin, Will, and Mike all agreed, moving to the spot Lucas had pointed out. As they walked, Lucas whispered his plan in Dustin's ear, with Dustin smirking and taking a bite of cookie when they came to a stop.

"Hey!" he said. "You guys are standing under mistletoe."

"Really?" Lucas asked, feigning surprise. "Well, I'll be. I didn't even see that!"

"Sure," Mike said, rolling his eyes before glancing down at Will. He looked like a deer caught in headlights, his eyes big and slowly trailing upward to look at the mistletoe dangling over their heads.

"You gotta kiss," Lucas said. "Those are the rules."

"Says who?" Mike asked.

"Says everyone!" Dustin cried. "Go on!"

"Would you kiss your mother under this?" Mike asked.

“Ew, no!” Dustin and Lucas said simultaneously.

“See?” Mike said with a smug grin.

“But this is different,” Dustin said, starting on another cookie.

“How so?” Mike asked curiously.

“Just do it!” Lucas cried. “You both obviously like each other. This is long overdue.”

“I do not!” Mike retorted. “El. I...maybe, kinda, did like her, but Will...he’s my best friend. That’s all.”

“One quick kiss,” Lucas assured. “Two seconds. That’s it. It’ll be like it never even happened.”

Mike sighed in defeat, turning to face Will. The smaller boy had slowly turned to look at Mike, eyes still large with fear as Mike took both of Will’s hands in his own. Both boys’ hands were clammy, nerves making them practically dizzy. Will began to calm at Mike’s touch, however, eyes returning to their normal shape and nerves settling little by little. He stood on his tiptoes and Mike bent slightly, his lips only a breath away from Will’s. This was the closest they’d gotten yet, and they could hear Dustin and Lucas “ooh”ing and “aww”ing and giggling next to them.

“Will!” Joyce’s voice rang out, causing Will to move back immediately. She appeared a moment later. “Sweetie, we need to go. It’s getting late.”

Will offered Mike an apologetic smile, waiting until Joyce turned to leave before planting a kiss on the very corner of Mike’s mouth. Dustin and Lucas cheered as Will walked away, Mike’s cheeks growing red-hot. Every time that moment crossed his mind that night, his cheeks would go red all over again.

6. The Kiss.

There had been too many near-kisses with no actual kiss taking place, and Mike was fed up.

He'd known for a while that he liked Will as more than just a friend, even before Will had vanished into the Upside Down. Before Eleven came into his life. Before everything had just gotten crazy. He was fairly certain by now that Will reciprocated his feelings, for he saw how Will had always looked at him with those doe eyes when Will thought that Mike wasn't paying attention. He saw the way Will would blush when their hands would accidentally touch. He especially noticed the way Will didn't pull away during those kisses that almost occurred, like he'd also wanted it to happen.

And then there were the times they held hands, and Mike absolutely adored how perfectly Will's hand fit with his own. As if it were meant to be there.

One night during a thunderstorm, Mike was huddled in Eleven's fort, while Will read a comic on the couch. Spring had just arrived, and the two boys were spending the first weekend of Spring Break together. Dustin and Lucas were set to join them Sunday for a few more days, but Will & Mike secretly enjoyed it being just the two of them for a little while.

After all, they didn't have a crush on their other friends.

Thunder boomed loudly and the wind howled, Will yelping in response as he laid the comic on the table next to the couch. He brought his knees to his chest, closing his eyes as Mike peeked out of the fort. His brow furrowed in worry as he saw Will, chewing his lip before saying, "Will? Is everything okay?"

Will opened his eyes, smiling half-heartedly. "Yeah. I just...ever since I got back, loud noises just really set me on edge. I dunno why, I guess...because I'm paranoid that the Demogorgon or some other monster may come for me."

Mike frowned, holding his hand out to Will. "C'mere. You'll be safe in

here with me, I promise. I won't let anyone or anything hurt you. Ever."

Will smiled a bit more genuinely, moving quickly from the couch to join Mike in the fort. He settled next to his best friend, and nearly went pink in the face when Mike pulled Will to his side. Being close to Mike like this was already comforting Will, and he rested his head on Mike's shoulder. He felt Mike laying his cheek against the top of Will's head, which caused Will's own head to spin furiously and his pulse to thud nervously.

"Will?" Mike asked after a moment of silence. "I...need to tell you something."

"What is it?" Will asked. "Is everything alright?"

"Yeah!" Mike assured. "I mean...I think it is. It's...well, it's about..."

"About what?" Will asked, suddenly concerned for his friend. "Are you sure you're—"

"I like you," Mike blurted.

This caused Will to snap up a bit. "What? What did you just say?"

Will felt Mike's fingers under his chin, tilting his head up so he could look at him. Thunder crashed and lightning flashed, and Will could see that Mike's cheeks were flushed. Mike's eyes were on Will's, and Will couldn't help but gaze back.

"I like you," Mike repeated, slower and gentler than he had moments earlier, choosing his words very carefully. "A lot, Will. I know...look, I know I had El, and I really liked her, too. I just...I've liked you for so long and when I thought you died...nothing felt right. And El, she's...she's...she's gone. She's gone, and I don't know if she's ever coming back. I mean, she would want me to be happy. Wouldn't she? I mean, I don't know..."

Will had stopped listening to Mike's rambling. His heart was pounding in his ears due to Mike's confession, and it was drowning out Mike's voice. He just glanced at Mike's lips—always so damn mesmerizing when he spoke—longing to finally kiss him. To do the

only thing he'd wanted to do for the last year or two.

Will's eyes met Mike's again, who was looking at Will nervously. Those chocolate eyes were brimmed with worry and fear, and Will immediately felt guilty for tuning out the last of Mike's statement. He moved closer to Mike, sitting up a bit so he was fulling facing his friend. Their eyes met again as Will's stomach churned anxiously, his insides turning to jelly as he moved his lips closer to Mike's. Will expected to go slowly, to work his way there and maybe even chicken out. The rain poured, lightning struck in bright white light, and thunder resonated in the basement around them, but Will no longer noticed.

All he noticed now was Mike Wheeler. His eyes, his freckled cheeks washed in a gentle pink hue, his lips, and the way Will could almost hear Mike's heartbeat between them. It was now or never.

To Will's surprise, however, Mike practically leaped forward to close the space between their lips. Before Will knew what was happening, Mike's lips were pressed against his own. Will froze for a split second before relaxing, eyes slipping shut as he relished in the warmth and sweetness of Mike's lips. It was a gentle, chaste kiss and lasted all of three seconds, but they were the best three seconds of Will's entire life.

He couldn't get the way Mike had kissed him out of his mind for the rest of the night, or the way Mike had tasted like spearmint toothpaste on his lips after. He couldn't erase the shy look that Mike had given him after they pulled away from his mind, or the way he chuckled before pulling Will into a hug that seemed to last a lifetime. It was something that would keep Will awake that night, long after Mike had fallen asleep next to him in that fort. Their arms were wrapped around each other, still in that earlier hug, with Mike holding Will protectively to his chest. Both were afraid—terrified, actually—that Will would get captured again. While they also knew that it was pretty unlikely, they still didn't want to take any chances. It was unlikely the first time, too, and look what had ended up happening.

For the remainder of the night, Will would replay those words and would daydream about future kisses with Mike Wheeler. As the storm

raged on outside, as Mike slept and snored lightly, Will turned to these thoughts for complete serenity. When a particularly loud clap of thunder or bright flash of lightning would hit, Will snuggled deeper into Mike's chest, seeking more comfort in the taller boy's heartbeat. His own heart, racing from fear, would calm almost instantly each time.

Before Will finally slipped off to sleep that night, he wondered how Lucas and Dustin would react—even Mike & Will's own families. His final thought of the night was wondering if Mike would have the same thought process as Will and would daydream about him, too, when he woke up tomorrow morning.

Maybe Mike was even dreaming about him and what the future may hold for both of them.